

The system is most singular. The male continued copulating nearly one hour, but I could not observe that they locked like dogs, and they did not turn as the latter animals do. The time of gestation has been twelve weeks from the first act of copulation; four cubs were produced, which continued blind for nine days."—J. J. ISAACSON, *Liverpool Zoological Gardens*.

ON A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ORDER OF INSECTIVOROUS MAMMALIA
BELONGING TO NEW HOLLAND. BY M. GERVAIS.

The animal which is the subject of this note has been recently described in England under the name of *Myrmecobius fasciatus* by Mr. Waterhouse, who considers it as belonging to the class of the *Didelphides*, at the same time noticing the points of resemblance between it and certain Insectivora, and principally with the *Tupaia* or *Cladobata*. M. Gervais, insisting on these resemblances, remarks, that, comparing the osseous head of the *Myrmecobius* with that of the *Didelphides*, we find in the existence of two palatin holes (instead of four as in this group of animals), in the arrangement of the ascending branch of the lower jaw, &c., differences which would rather induce us to refer this new genus to the monodelphial mammifera than to the didelphial.—*Compte Rendu*, No. 14, Oct. 1838.

CAOUTCHOUC IN PLANTS*.

The substance caoutchouc is a widely disseminated constituent of vegetable fluids. It has hitherto, I believe, been found only in plants with milky juice, although its presence in all plants yielding such fluid remains to be proved. The presence of caoutchouc in silk has been, I believe, attributed to the nature of the fluids of the plants on which the caterpillars feed; but this, although applicable to the mulberry plants, can scarcely hold good with the various species of *Tetranthera* on which the Moonga feeds, or with the castor-oil plant, the chief food of the Eria, which in Assam does not appear to yield milk. Milky juice is often characteristic of certain families, but often not; its presence is frequently of importance, as it often affords valuable indications of affinity. It is remarkable that it is almost unknown in the grand division of Monocotyledonous plants. The families in which its presence may be said to be universal are *Apocquea*, *Asclepiadea*, *Campanulacea*, *Sobeliacea* and the great division of *Compositæ*, *Chicoracea*, of which the lettuce is a familiar example. It is of common occurrence in *Euphorbiacea* and *Tulicea*, which orders may be looked on as the grand sources of caoutchouc.

* From Mr. Wm. Griffith's Report. Journ. of the Asiatic Soc. of Bengal.

Thus, in addition to our Indian plants, the American caoutchouc is supposed to be produced by *Cecropia peltata*, which belongs to *Urticea* and the ule tree of Papantla, from which the caoutchouc of that country is obtained, is supposed to belong to the same orders. I must, however, observe that Baron Humboldt objects to the supposition of *Cecropia peltata* yielding the American caoutchouc, as its juice is difficult to inspissate*.

The order *Euphorbiacea* would likewise appear to supply a large quantity. Thus Dr. Lindley informs us that the true caoutchouc is furnished by *Siphonia elastica*, *Hevia quiancusis* of Aublet, a Surinam and Brazilian tree; and it is from a tree of this order that a substance resembling caoutchouc is procured in Sierra Leone.

Some *Apocqueæ* are also reported to produce good caoutchouc†; thus *Aricola elastica* produces the caoutchouc of Sumatra, and it is from this plant that caoutchouc has been produced in Penang and exported to England‡. *Willughbeia edulis* is likewise an Indian plant from which caoutchouc has been produced, but Roxburgh says it is of indifferent quality: unless I have been misled, good caoutchouc is obtained from *Nerium grandiflorem* of Roxburgh.

It is probably equally abundant in *Asclepiadea*; one plant of which order *Cynanchum albiflorem* has been stated to yield it of excellent quality in Penang. Mr. Royle seems inclined to attribute the great tenacity of the fibres of some plants of both these orders to its presence, but this supposition seems to me of very doubtful accuracy §.

OBITUARY.

The death of the Chevalier Frederic Cuvier (the news of which reached us some time ago) has awakened the deepest regret among a numerous circle of friends and savans. This excellent man was on his return to Paris, from one of those annual journeys which his office of Inspector General to the University obliged him to make, and was seized with paralysis at Strasbourg; the alleviation is contained in the reflection that he was in this city surrounded by friends and the best medical aid, but neither affection nor skill could avail, and in four days he was no more. He was born at Montbéliard, in 1773, was called to Paris by his illustrious brother, Baron George Cuvier, and became keeper of the Ménagerie at the Jardin des

* Lindley's Introduction to Natural System of Botany, p. 176.

† Lindley's Instructions, p. 300.

‡ Royle's Illustrations, p. 329, under *Euphorbiacea*, and p. 270, under *Apocquea*.

§ Royle's Illustrations, p. 274.